

January 25 Revolution: Morsi's Presidency
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LEAD-IN:

On Police Day in 2011 something happened that no Egyptian, American, or Intelligence Agency around the world could have predicted. A revolution was born in Egypt, demanding the rights of the people after decades of oppression, police brutality, poverty, unemployment, and widespread corruption on every level of the state. This was nothing compared to the 1952 military coup that brought the country to where it is now, but rather a people's revolution that had never happened before in the history of modern Egypt. A year and five months in, Egypt's first free presidential elections ever have taken place.

Once the news came that Egypt's first freely elected president was to be a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an opposition group that was long banned and frequently subjected to persecution and terror by the government, millions were hopeful that this was the start of something new. That change was finally going to occur.

Although the Brotherhood had been long gone in the lines of the revolution, people were still willing to give them a chance.

SOUND 1: Morsi's inauguration address in Tahrir Square

However, while Morsi was in office, something new began to happen. Something that revolutionaries were constantly being accused of doing since the beginning of the revolution, but had never actually taken place. Violence was introduced from the side of the demonstrators.

SOUND 2: Gunshots, protesters, rock throwing, yelling

On November 19th, in a demonstration in remembrance of those that fell during the Mohamed Mahmoud clashes a year ago calling for their rights, a group of people began to harass an idle police force, that was separated from the protesters by a cement wall.

Although most of the protesters were only chanting and waving flags, others started throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at the police that only responded after hours of harassment by throwing back rocks, and occasionally launching a tear gas canister.

Many people didn't understand what was going on, or what the reason behind the violence was.

This fighting continued for a few days until President Morsi decided to issue a constitutional decree immunizing all his decisions from the judiciary that essentially granted him sweeping powers over the branches of government.

Following this constitutional decree, people took to the streets. As there was still intermittent fighting going on around Tahrir Square, people filled the street around the presidential palace.

But on December 5th, acts reminiscent of the previous regime's tactics took place. Ahmed Shamaa, a filmmaker and activist, recalls what happened at the presidential palace, also known as the Etihedeya Palace.

SHAMAA: Followers of the Muslim Brotherhood moved to the streets and started kicking and hurting peaceful protesters who were demonstrating in front of the Etihedeya Palace. And then the cycle of violence begun. Protesters came and there were gunfire and some Muslim Brotherhood people died and some protesters died and from that day the cycle of Molotov cocktails and the cycle of torture have been reborn again. (:34)

SOUND 3: Gunshots, protesters, rock throwing, yelling (continued)

The Etihedeya clashes left at least 5 people dead and almost 500 people injured. And ever since then, almost any protest that begins as peaceful quickly becomes violent. The demonstrations on January 25th, 2013 in commemoration of the revolution, the demonstrations on February 2nd, 2013 in remembrance of those who died at the Port Said soccer game, and almost all other protests planned against the Brotherhood, turned into violent confrontations between the protesters and the security forces.

What happened?

SHAMAA: After the election of Mohamed Morsi, people lost their patience. For two years they have been fighting and they didn't get the results they wanted. Everybody thought that after the election of a president, everything will be okay and we will have a free country or the free country that we strived for or that we wanted. But this didn't happen. The results of the Mohamed Morsi's performance was really disappointing. He didn't use any of the revolutionary youth in his government, he didn't ask for their opinions, even some of the revolutionary figures he used as an assistants or staff most of them resigned from their positions because they were like puppets and nobody asked for

their opinions. The performance of the new government is really really bad and it is not the performance that we hoped for, we didn't die for that. People didn't die people didn't lose their eyes so that we can exchange a military rule with a rule that claims to be revolutionary but they are not revolutionary at all. (1:11)

Ahmed Saleh, someone else who has also been present in the revolution from the very beginning, offers his outlook.

SALEH: It's just that people are angry and that's a way of getting out their anger. I think violence is justified because there are no more things to do and you can't accept being faced with violence for two years and then not to respond with violence. Trying all peaceful methods for two years and none of them are working and you have been faced with all types of violent resistance, so people want change and there has been many things paid for this change and if the non-violence means don't work then the violent means will start to be used. I never hoped for this but it's a very normal outcome. (:59)

Professor of Journalism Firas Al-Atraqchi at The American University in Cairo also shares his perspective.

FIRAS: There was a significant amount of hope that not only the young people had, but also the older generations. The fact that nothing concrete came about over the past two years is reason for extreme frustration. People want change, they're desperate for change, they thought they were on the threshold of significant change, some of these people have had jobs lost over the past two years, there is a growing hunger among people, so what you see happening is people feel that they have nothing to lose if they resort to violence. Or they are so moved emotionally by what they have been through over the past two years this rollercoaster one day hopeful one day not hopeful, that's enough to make anyone crack. (:56)

What about the public figures and political parties commonly referred to as the opposition and claim to represent the revolution? Where are they in all of this?

SHAMAA: The National Salvation Front is just a bunch of greedy greedy politicians who represents no one, they represent only themselves. And this is not my only opinion this is the opinion of everyone in the street. They don't have this popularity. What they are trying to do is replacing, just to replace the current regime. But they are no different from the current regime. They call for protests and stuff but they don't actually participate in them, random people, regular people citizens, participate and die, while Mr. Baradie and Mr Hamdeen Sabahy are sitting in their offices and or giving interviews for national TVs

and stuff or international networks and saying that 'we deny and we are against them' but on the street people regular people are dying. (1:00)

FIRAS: I don't believe that the momentum and the aspirations and the energies of the people in Tahrir have been transformed into some kind of political vision let alone a political bloc or political platform. What you had is the politicians of yesteryear come to Tahrir make a few statements maybe win a few hundred supporters then go on to form their own party and now they're supposed to be in this National Salvation Front which hasn't saved anyone or anything not even their own reputations. They have not put anything forward, they have been completely reactive, never proactive which shows you that they have a fundamental disconnect with what's going on in the country. (:52)

SALEH: The political opposition right now only cares about political goals and not the revolution itself. Many people are trying to hijack the revolution. After the presidential elections even, you can find someone like Shafik speaking by the name of the revolution. Many people affiliated with the Mubarak regime are now speaking as if they are part of the revolution. Every politician is trying to hijack the revolution to his way. Whether the Muslim Brotherhood or the salvation front. Every side is trying to take the revolution to its political goals and objectives. (:50)

More recent protests that have turned violent were the ones planned in late March in Mokattam against the Muslim Brotherhood. With some protesters having the clear intentions to attack the Brotherhood's headquarters, others got caught in brutal street fighting that lasted for hours injuring over 120 people.

With no political party or group or entity of any sort formed that truly represents the revolution and the people on the street, rising costs of food and energy commodities, lawlessness increasing, and a government that continues that use the same oppressive tactics that resulted in the ouster of Mubarak, the future seems to be full of uncertainty.

SOUND 4: Cairokee's song "Matloob Za'eem"

However, just as the Egyptian people have persevered through the first 18 days of the revolution with all forces working against them, and just as they have continued to fight for their rights over the past two years, the Egyptian people will never be suppressed again.

Thanks to YouTube user Ramy Yaacoub for the sound of the street clashes and YouTube user TheOCCUPY215 for President Mohamed Morsi's Inauguration Address. Additional thanks to Cairokee for their song "Matloob Za'eem."